TIM BURT & MARTYN EVANS

EPILOGUE

When we launched the *Collegiate Way* website to announce the 2014 Durham conference, we included the following statement:

> Establishing and maintaining colleges needs no justification to those who have experience of them – but all who work within collegiate systems are familiar with the need to be able to articulate their benefits, and to show how these justify the additional cost-base of the collegiate experience. How is this best achieved?

The whole point of the conference was to share experiences of collegiate life, to identify and spread good practices, and to bring together in conversation representatives from the widest possible range of colleges worldwide. This book, a direct outcome of the conference, has sought to continue those conversations and to articulate the benefits of a collegiate way of organising a university. But we did not approach our subject matter uncritically: we wanted to identify possible weaknesses in our college operations and thereby opportunities for doing things differently, and better.

Mark Ryan writes that our first task is to push that conversation away from simple economic calculations, towards the broader purposes of undergraduate education. If we are not careful, higher education is seen merely as job training. Whilst the immediate marketability of the degree cannot be ignored, Ryan argues that the most basic axiom of a residential college is that a university education has much broader goals that are vital to society, and our first task, drawing on our long collegiate heritage, is to assert them.

Other authors echo his comments: for example, Adrian Simpson emphasises the enabling view of collegiate education, seeing disciplinary thinking as only one (important) embodiment of a generalised way of thinking about the world. Ryan harks back to the Aristotelian distinction between 'mere life' and 'the good life': the first has to do with sustenance, the second with individual growth and fulfilment within a community. 'A dormitory is organised for mere life, a college for the good life,' he concludes! Of course, there are always those that do not 'get it,' those who hold quite different views of graduateness and the roles of universities. There is always the danger of talking at cross purposes and Simpson reminds us that we need to consider carefully how to deal with 'different worlds in the same management committee.'

Much has been written in these pages about architecture and building design, and not just in the chapter by Gay Perez and Amy Aponte. On the one hand, some

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have had the chance to develop new colleges from scratch, whereas others have had to make do with what they inherited. Yet modest quality of accommodation need not prevent there being a strong student community and a brand new college may not work if provision of shared facilities is inadequate and the residents have very restricted opportunity to meet one another. In times of financial stringency, the trick is to get the most for one's money and it is clearly worthwhile to think through the possibilities. Catered or non-catered? Small groups of bedrooms (often 5 or 6) sharing one kitchen-diner or a larger kitchen and dining area serving say 30 or 50? We have even seen one new hall of residence in Edinburgh where 480 graduates successfully share a single catering space, apparently successfully! Does a college need its own grounds or can a perfectly agreeable college community flourish in a high-rise? Does a college need any accommodation of its own at all, or could it exist in a virtual space? Probably there is a minimum need for some 'public' space but whatever that is, students will soon make the place their own, arranging the furniture, wall decoration and colour scheme to suit the community traditions. And in any space, ritual and tradition will seemingly soon develop! It is interesting too that some colleges have developed a greater degree of granularity with corridors and staircases being used to divide up the student community into smaller friendship groups.

If designing the physical space is a challenge, managing the human space is doubly so. There is clearly an on-going debate about how much support our students need. In general, colleges seem to provide much more support than non-collegiate halls of residence, but Terri Apter warns against offering too much support. There is some evidence that colleges maximise student retention but the cost can be a lack of independence and too great a reliance on welfare support staff, for a minority of students at least. Peer support seems to be a hallmark of college communities, something to beware of in extreme cases where some students take on an unreasonable burden looking after their friends. W.P. Wahl warns against too much 'direction' and it seems right to us that college officers facilitate whilst the students administer their societies, sports clubs, and so on. Supporting student self-governance gains worldwide recognition, in fact, from Australia (Philip Dutton), South Africa (W.P. Wahl), Canada (Michael Eamon) and the USA (John Hutchinson), and we see this writ large in the Durham colleges. In that sense, neither of us 'runs' our colleges! Of course, the social bond of residence, as Mark Ryan puts it, is at the heart of the college community. For some colleges, membership equates to residence but, given how strong the commitment to a college community can become, we see every reason to continue membership after the students move out into privately rented accommodation; many will still return to college frequently, spending more time there than at home, helping to run 'their' college even as a non-resident. As Paula Hutchinson concludes, a robust college system fosters dedication and service, the foundation of any college community.

This brings us on to the size and shape of a college. Colleges can be too large. Terri Apter writes of the 'genius of scale;' happily for her, Cambridge colleges have generally retained their small size. However, for many Durham colleges,

having a student membership the wrong side of a thousand can mean that the community is just too big: it is impossible to know everyone. There is an allied question too about the balance of a college community: it needs a mix of years in our view, some older, more mature residents to leaven the fresher intake. Some postgraduate residents are good too, raising for some undergraduates the prospect of life after their first degree. It is hard to be prescriptive about the balance of residents and non-residents but a figure of 40% in residence seems to be a minimum, below which the resident college population is likely to be too dominated by freshers, with too few others to add variety. Given a maximum size and a minimum number of residents, collegiate universities must be prepared to build new colleges as they are needed; the short-term expediency of 'squeezing in a few more first-years' can only, in the long term, diminish the quality of what is on offer.

As ever, we return to Mark Ryan and the conclusions to his chapter for our inspiration:

> The residential college is not, I believe, soon to become 'largely obsolete'… but it may take its place in a multi-tiered system that involves an increasing array of low-residency and non-residential options. The educational goals to which we aspire may be most effectively gained through residence, but they are not utterly dependent on it. We are likely to discover more ways in which they can be promoted, to one degree or another, by electronic interactions. For that reason, too, it is vital that we clarify those goals, understand them more fully, promote them more vigorously, so that to some degree, they may be integrated into low- or even non-residential forms of education, so that those who opt to take such routes, whether by preference or necessity, reap a measure of their benefits.

As we take our own colleges forward, and encourage other universities to follow our lead, what varieties of collegiate community might emerge in the 21st century? Is it possible to provide virtual college membership to 'distance leaners' or must there be some physical grounding to college membership? What will be the balance of social media and face-to-face conversation? We certainly encourage our students to gather at the common table and one of us has established a device-free zone in the college dining hall so that the students must chat to each other. We remain optimistic about the future of the *collegiate way* but we recognise that fiscal pressures and new technology may pose a threat. Thus, as Mark Ryan exhorts us, it vital that we, who have the most intimate sense of the value of smaller residential communities in a university setting, bring our voices to the table.

And not only we college officers, but also the student members whom we serve. At universities of all kinds, young people explore both their chosen subjects and their own personalities; experimenting with ways of thinking and acting and choosing; discovering the extent to which different futures are open to them; and working out who it is they want to be and how it is they want to live. *Collegiate* life enriches and intensifies this process immeasurably. Of course we cannot and

should not try to control the outcomes of their experiments, but we can shape and influence the process and its conduct. We can encourage liberality of thought and a kindlier acceptance of diversity, helping the confidence of those who want to take steps along less ordinary or less familiar paths. We can encourage rigour and steadfastness of thought, a closer understanding of actions and consequences, and a firmer grasp of the grounding of conclusions in sound premisses. We can applaud excellence, even elitism, in hard-won achievement while seeking to disarm the unearned elitism of privileged background and prior opportunity. Perhaps most importantly – given that roles of responsibility and leadership abound in college life – we can to a modest extent both hone and temper the ambitions of some of those young people who are going to go on to leadership positions in tomorrow's society.

Tolerant, kindly, rigorous, steadfast and intellectually-liberal leadership seem to be needed more than ever. Within traditional collegiate life we have to support students facing very contemporary challenges and anxieties – those concerning economic insecurity, mental health problems, unrealistic expectations of affluence and celebrity, the use of alcohol as a 'fuel' for socialising, the fear of failure (made more expensive by rising fees) and so on. Equally, college life is not wholly immune from the importing of broader societal problems: individual students can be guilty of degrading attitudes towards women particularly in the context of sex; they can sometimes exhibit the narcissism of privilege, or even xenophobia or religious intolerance. We cannot screen such things out at the stage of admitting students (and even if we could, we would find ourselves in the traditional liberal paradox). We must instead seek to counter them, through how we nurture those voices of leadership that will be listened to in times to come.

Peer education on such matters is inevitably by far the most effective, albeit supplemented from time to time by access to pertinent factual information as it emerges. Student-run alcohol awareness campaigns reach the parts, as it were, that other alcohol awareness campaigns cannot reach! It is through students' own initiatives, catalysed by their energies and imaginations and communicated in their own vocabulary, that retrogressive attitudes on a range of issues will be examined, pause will be taken, and minds and attitudes changed. (Perhaps the one exception to this emphasis on peer education concerns mental health, where even senior college officers quickly reach the limits of their knowledge and must refer students to the relevant professionals.)

But we have to face external as well as internal challenges. The socio-economic expectations placed upon higher education are changing around us, and the structures and management of universities are feverishly adapting to these expectations. How widely their responses seem to vary! As this Volume has charted, some east Asian universities in particular are embracing the collegiate approach to higher education to a spectacular extent; yet at the same time some longer-established collegiate universities (usually also in longer-established economies) seem cautious in respect of the investment of resources, time and careful attention in university education that is required for a collegiate way

genuinely worth the name. For some of us, then, the 'price of colleges' includes an element of endurance as well as of vigilance, at least for a while.

Even so, taken as a whole the collegiate ethos worldwide may be on the threshold of an exuberant flowering. We have a part to play in this, not simply in terms of how we implement and advocate that ethos, but in terms also of how we nourish the intellectual capacities and the moral imaginations of our students. Tomorrow's higher education, quite as much as any other aspect of society, needs their leadership. Their surest road to gaining the qualities that they – and we – need lies along the Collegiate Way. It is our privilege to light the path.

Tim Burt
Hatfield College
Durham University

Martyn Evans
Trevelyan College
Durham University